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Memorial of Deborah B. Webb. 1826

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MEMORIAL.

A Memorial of Kennet Monthly Meeting of Friends concerning DEBORAH B. WEBB, *who departed this life on the tenth day of Eleventh Month, 1895, in the sixty-sixth year of her age.*

WHEN the faithful servants of the Most High have finished their course with joy, it seems fitting that survivors should keep some memorial of them, that the great Name may be exalted, and that others may be induced to follow them, even as they followed Christ. We are constrained to express our sense of the loss sustained by the church on earth by the removal of our dear friend, and at the same time, briefly and simply, as most in accordance with her character to set forth some of her exercises and experiences.

Deborah B. Webb was the daughter of Adam and Hepzibah Brooks, and was born in the town of Scituate, Plymouth County, Mass., on the nineteenth day of Fourth Mo., 1830. Her parents were members of the Society of Friends, but she does not appear, in

her early years, to have been much attached to its principles and testimonies, and especially objected to that simplicity in her outward appearance which the Truth enjoins. Of this period she afterward said, "The last thing I intended to be was a plain Friend." It is evident, however, from a journal commenced before she was sixteen years of age, that her mind was not easy on this point, for we find her recording, on the twenty-first of Third Month, 1847, "I read considerably in the Bible, after which I began thinking about myself. I thought I would become part plain, then get plainer as I grew older; but it came into my mind that I should be like Ananias and Sapphira, of whom we read in the Holy Scriptures."

When about eighteen years of age she was powerfully visited by the Day-spring from on high, under the convincing testimony of Stephen Grellet, in a meeting at Burlington, N. J. Of this she wrote, "This brought me first to a conviction that it was required of me to put away my gay attire and become a Friend again, for I had strayed from the paths of peace and from the simplicity of Friends. I do sincerely desire that thou, O Lord, should carry on the work which thou

hast commenced, and make me every whit clean, and let me be thy dear child."

She was very desirous to enter Westtown School as a pupil. "Knowing," she says, "that I needed more education if I intended to follow teaching, and also feeling that was the place into which I could go to learn of God's will, and cast off my gay clothing, in which I was ashamed to be seen by any whom I considered the children of God. It seemed they all knew I was disobeying my Heavenly Father. . . . At last I was permitted to enter, and spend one year there, learning of my wicked nature, and of that God who had so graciously called me." There is no doubt but our friend was thus being prepared for future usefulness, and the outward attire became one of the tests of obedience, while she was being deeply grounded in lessons of submission and faith.

After leaving Westtown, in the spring of 1850, she was engaged for many years in teaching, first at Parkerville, then at West Chester, and afterward, for a longer period, in Philadelphia. Many have recalled in later years, the lessons of religious instruction she gave them, and the gentle, restraining influence of her exercised spirit upon them,

while they were yet little children under her care.

She passed through many deep baptisms and much conflict of spirit for many years before she was brought to a state of entire submission to the will of her Heavenly Father, but when that was accomplished, she became remarkably devoted to his cause. Her faith and trust were strong, and she wished "to have no will but his." She came forth in the ministry about the thirty-fourth year of her age, to the satisfaction of her friends, and in 1868 she was recommended a minister by the Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia for the Northern District. Her communications were lively and pointed, not burdensome for length, and bore evidence of being the outpourings of an earnest, though sweet and quiet spirit, anointed of God.

Her first visit with a minute from her Monthly Meeting was in the Seventh and Eighth Months of 1869, to the meetings of Concord and Western Quarterly Meetings. Of this visit she wrote, "My blessed Master had made it plain to me and answered all my objections, all my doubts, in regard to the requiring. I went forth, feeling very poor and weak, but at seasons was helped,

and the Lord gave words when I knew nothing in myself. Thanksgiving and praise were the covering of my spirit on returning. He doth still put forth and go before his trembling, timid sheep."

In the Tenth Month of the same year, she visited, in company with another Friend, the families of her Monthly Meeting. She was also frequently and acceptably engaged in the exercise of her gift in her own and neighboring meetings, as well as in some visits to families and meetings within the limits of her Quarterly Meeting.

She relinquished teaching, and in 1883 was united in marriage with Stephen A. Webb, of Parkerville, and became a valued member of Kennet Monthly Meeting. Her husband was removed by death after a union of only seven months. The covering of her spirit, under this afflicting dispensation, was resignation to the Divine will, and soon after she wrote, "My own health seems poor, but may I serve Thee all that Thou wouldst. Thou hast promised to be a God of the widow. Oh, be pleased to give me wisdom and meekness for every emergency."

After her husband's death, she was much engaged in visiting families within the limits

of Western Quarterly Meeting, and in company with another Friend, she visited, in Gospel love, Ohio Yearly Meeting, in the autumn of 1885.

The summer of 1886 was a time of great suffering to our dear Friend, and little hope was entertained of her being restored. To a ministering Friend who had spoken comfortably to her, she said, "My Heavenly Father knows I am here, and that if He had any service for me to perform, He could enable me to do it." Contrary to expectation, her health was in some degree restored, and she said that though she expected there would be a service for her, none at first appeared. In the autumn of 1887 she was awakened one morning by a dream that she was in a large room with windows open on all sides, and she heard evil, blasphemous words in every direction. She awoke with the query, "Will no one speak a word for the Master?" She lay quite still, and her Heavenly Father unfolded to her a field of service, to visit, in Gospel love, one hundred families of every class and color in the neighborhood. This led her among some rough people, but she was treated with kindness and respect. She wrote, "It is wonderful

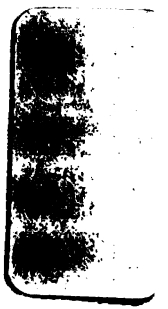
how kindly we have been received. The dear Master did, indeed, go before, and we trust that God, whose kingdom we have tried to elevate in the hearts of the people, will press home the truth and give the increase. The kingdom is his, the power is his, and the glory all his forever."

After this her health again declined, notwithstanding which she obtained a minute in the Fifth Month of 1894 to visit the meetings of Philadelphia Quarter. In both this and the last mentioned instance, the Friends of her meeting were called to exercise a large degree of faith, being scarcely able with the natural eye to see how, in her weak condition, the arduous service could be performed. The visit to Philadelphia Quarter was felt by herself to be an evening sacrifice. She was mercifully strengthened to complete it, to the peace of her own mind and the satisfaction of her friends. A solemn feeling accompanied the return of her minute in the Eighth Month following, and this proved to be the last occasion on which she attended her meeting.

Her health, which had long been feeble, now more decidedly failed; she suffered much from pain and excessive weakness in the last

years of her life, and often longed to go to her heavenly home. In a letter to a friend in the Third Month of 1893, she writes, after an animated description of the joys of the heavenly city, "Which of us three [referring to her friend and her husband], will reach there first we know not, but we trust our God and Redeemer, and love Him — and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate." Again, in Tenth Month of 1895, to a friend who was also confined to the house, she says: "We are the dear Lord's prisoners. Sweet He is to us both. . . . We know not when the end may come, but we love his will."

The end came suddenly, but we have the comforting assurance that her lamp was trimmed and her light burning, ready to enter when the Bridegroom came.



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